

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Harris.

2 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Madame Chairman, gentlemen
3 and fellow Commissioners. My name is Otis Harris. I have lived
4 in Las Vegas for 56 years. I have attended high school in Las
5 Vegas, University of Nevada Reno, University of Las Vegas on a
6 continuous basis. But I wanted to -- and I really thank and
7 appreciate having an opportunity to be here today. Since my
8 fellow panelists were so good in their presentations, I'm going
9 to just drop mine and just talk to you from the heart here.

10 What I'm really concerned about, and I saw on the
11 panel today, that I'm here to represent the community. But it's
12 very difficult for me to actually to that. I'm a business
13 person who specializes in inner city and rural development.
14 I've been here doing this over 25 years, and one of the
15 interests that I have has been always the underprivileged people
16 in impacted areas, and I worked with the state of Nevada in
17 doing that several years ago. I was also involved with control
18 data as a community development specialist, and I have always
19 believed that our inner cities have a lot of wealth in them, as
20 long as it's mined properly.

21 I have a letter from Mayor James Weiland (ph.) from
22 Atlantic City, New Jersey. In our discussion with him we were
23 asking how the gambling community benefited his community. And
24 he said that the gambling industry here, as elsewhere, has
25 aspired a record of civil involvement, particularly in the
26 minority community. I want you to know that when, as I talk,

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1 I'm not speaking directly as a minority. I'm speaking for
2 people -- for all people who need to have some advancement in
3 life, some opportunities.

4 Here in Las Vegas we do have a community that I've
5 lived in -- as a matter of fact I moved back into that
6 community. And anyone whose gone there will recognize that
7 community has never benefited from gambling in Las Vegas. As a
8 matter of fact, as I heard these other people telling you how
9 great gambling is to the community as a whole, I haven't been
10 able to see that in that particular community we call the west
11 side. That community's a multi-ethnic community. It's not one
12 community of just one race of people. So I asked myself how
13 long will it take for the impact to reach that community. I've
14 lived there 56 years, and I'm just about ready to be put in a
15 box I think pretty soon, so I still ask that question. How long
16 is it going to take for us to get there. I'm getting
17 frustrated. I'm very frustrated. I send letters to our top
18 casino industries here to ask them could they in their great
19 expertise help us plan for that community to receive benefits,
20 to a letter, to a person, to an industry, to a casino. I have
21 gotten a denial flat out. Some said no way, not interested. We
22 have other plans. One here says, our present corporate plans
23 don't include you. And I again say well, how long is it going
24 to take for that industry, for the industry that benefits the
25 state of Nevada so much to not look out for the least of us.

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1 It's not only the casino industry, but we look at
2 our legislative delegation; the same thing. I see the casino
3 industry downtown receives 50 million dollars of public monies
4 to ensure that the industry downtown was going to be successful
5 and create jobs and other things. But if you go across the
6 tracks less than a quarter of a mile away, you can see that it
7 has never been effective. You still will find the vacant lots.
8 Matter of fact, the industry that we had in our downtown looks
9 like a bombed out area of World War II. As a matter of fact, it
10 looks like Mississippi in 1940 in some of the areas. But we
11 don't -- we're not complaining about that, because what we
12 believe is that where there's problems there's also
13 opportunities. So I'm not here to beat up on the industry and
14 say look here you are no good. You won't do anything. I'm
15 saying that if the industry looked at what we believe we have,
16 we could show that we also can be a strong part of this economy
17 from the private enterprise sector.

18 We are not looking for support from the government.
19 We are not looking for regulations. We're not looking for
20 grants, but we're looking for opportunity. I'm a business
21 person. I believe business can turn that community around and
22 other areas in the Las Vegas area. So we're not just talking
23 about the west side here, we're talking about other areas within
24 this area.

25 I also am frustrated because I see and read our
26 industry going to other states, committing huge amount like 50

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1 million dollars in investment funds to another city, and we
2 still have a lot of problems that we haven't resolved here. We
3 see -- I saw an article going to a community saying look we'll
4 put 14 million dollars in inner city development. The gaming
5 community can play a strong role in helping us resolve some of
6 those problems. Not necessarily always money. They're the
7 greatest people in the world in marketing and planning and
8 coordinating and working with the unions and all those different
9 things that it takes to make a community work.

10 I still wonder how long will it take for that
11 industry to work with us. That's the issue that I bring to you
12 today. How long will it take? I'm still more frustrated as I
13 go along. I see that when the gambling industry goes out across
14 the country, moves into other cities, it's a dilution of our
15 industry. It dilutes us because particularly as I think from
16 the black community. The industry's gone to Biloxi, Atlantic
17 City, now Detroit, the midwest. Those are heavily known as
18 particularly black industries. That prevents people from coming
19 for us to be able to benefit from. Then as they dilute and as
20 the industry matures here in Las Vegas we are going to start
21 losing jobs. We're losing jobs now. Matter of fact, I can see
22 that some of these mergers are saying to me that some of these
23 companies are not doing so good so they want to sell themselves
24 to others so they won't just flat out fold up.

25 And it's good that we're having the industry here.
26 I'm not against gambling. I've lived around gambling all my

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1 life. I don't know anything else but gambling as far as an
2 employment center. But gambling also has a responsibility other
3 than just creating maid and porter jobs. Matter of fact, I
4 don't consider casino and hotel jobs one and the same because
5 some casinos don't have a hotel. But these people still owe
6 some civic responsibility to the community because there are
7 people that we call desperation gamblers; people who are poor
8 who are saying well, look I only have \$5 so let me go down to
9 the casino here and maybe with my \$5 I can turn it into \$15 to
10 buy lunch, buy dinner.

11 And my mother and my father we worked -- they worked
12 in the casino industry and the resort industry. They were
13 maids, porters, dishwashers, and we had eight children in the
14 family. We weren't educated but we did it ourselves. We worked
15 hard. We believe in working hard. No one helped us. We were
16 not on welfare. So I believe that we as a community can get
17 together, and the gaming community can work with us to turn
18 things around. But I'm just wondering how long is it going to
19 take them to realize that they do have a responsibility outside
20 of the casino doors that they have.

21 We are willing to work with them. We want to work
22 with them. We're not here to say well, look we want you to
23 close down. We don't believe in gambling, because I don't have
24 that kind of concern. My concern is that gambling has to be
25 more than just an employer. We have to have some kind of belief
26 that they have a responsibility to help diversify the rest of

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1 the community and be sure that when times do get bad for them,
2 that maybe the other part of the community is doing good and
3 that they will still employ people.

4 One of the things that bothers me also is that I
5 worked with the Ministers Alliance for several years, and it
6 appeared that the casino industry or the resort industry didn't
7 care about retirement. I hear that they care about retirement,
8 but I remember thousands of people coming really in NAACP, that
9 people came by and they worked 15, 16 years on the job and got
10 laid off or got terminated. Those people had nowhere to go
11 because they didn't have upward mobility because, you know, you
12 start out as a maid you end up as a maid. There is no cross
13 training for maids to go into the marketing department. There
14 is no cross training for them to go into the finance department.
15 Maybe they may have a friend in that industry that may pull them
16 over, but by and large it's a stagnant job.

17 So in my discussion with the community people this
18 week I didn't know what I wanted to talk about here. I knew I
19 wanted to talk about something, but this is -- I was asked to
20 deal with such a broad subject from the community that it was
21 difficult for me to determine what I needed to talk about.

22 But I just wanted to say to the industry, it's your
23 responsibility also for the entire community, because you're the
24 only industry in town. You're the only industry in the state,
25 and if you don't take a strong interest, then we're all in
26 trouble.

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1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

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